

Air Force Financial Management Strategic Plan

by Mr J. Ron Speer

Our Mission: To provide worldwide financial operations and management of Air Force resources necessary to defend the United States and protect its interests through aerospace power.

Our Vision: The best financial support to the world's premier Air Force—anytime, anywhere.

Our Goals: Improve Readiness to Support Deployed Operations; Recruit and Retain Talented People; Improve Budget Formulation and Execution; Provide Better Cost, Economic, and Financial Information; Improve Financial Accountability; Improve and Integrate Our Business Practices; and Organize and Communicate Effectively.

When asked to comment on his future several years ago, the outgoing Governor of New York, Mario Cuomo, responded, I have no plans and no plans to plan. Perhaps this is sound advice for a retiring Governor, but a large dynamic functional discipline like Air Force Financial Management needs to know where it is and where it needs to go. We know where we've been, we know where we are, and we will release the Air Force Financial Management Strategic Plan that will lay out where we are going. The plan identifies our mission, vision and values, defines our core competencies, and establishes goals to help us achieve those core competencies. This plan is the product of the best minds in our business representing literally hundreds of years of officer, enlisted, and civilian financial experience from Installations, Commands, and Headquarters. This is truly your plan for the future. It is designed to carry the Air Force financial management community into the new century. A copy should be available in your office or you may find it on the SAF/FM web site at <http://www.saffm.hq.af.mil/>. Please study this plan carefully and do your part to make it a reality. The following paragraphs discuss our plan and how we will make it a reality.

Our Mission

We provide worldwide financial operations and management of Air Force resources necessary to defend the United States and protect its interests through aerospace power.

Our Vision

The best financial support to the world's premier Air Force—anytime, anywhere.

A clear mission and vision, closely allied with the overall Air Force Mission and Vision Statements, set our direction. Core competencies and goals allow us to effectively perform our mission and realize our vision. The Air Force and its financial managers operate in a highly dynamic environment. Wars, contingencies, and humanitarian operations are routine matters occurring with little notice before deployment. Air Force financial managers are part of the lead cadre, often on the first plane and they must be well trained, properly equipped, and ready to perform.

Our Values

The Air Force has it right. Integrity First; Service Before Self; and Excellence In All We Do. We will perform our mission and achieve our vision using the Air Force values—anything less is unacceptable.

Core Competencies

Successfully accomplishing the Air Force mission and realizing our collective vision means turning a well-constructed written plan into reality. Financial managers must excel at the core competencies articulated below.

Support Deployed Operations. Financial managers have a key role during wars, other contingencies, and humanitarian operations. Whether deploying to a bare-base environment or a fully supported installation, we must provide financial services necessary to support our forces.

Formulate, Justify, and Execute Budgets. Although others play key roles in the budget process, it is our responsibility for making the process work. We must budget for the financial needs of our Service, explain and promote those needs, and ensure funds are executed efficiently and properly.

Deliver Financial Services. Financial management customers include every Air Force member as well as commercial vendors and other governmental agencies. By meeting needs for financial services, we permit people to perform their mission without distraction and we build solid business relationships with reliable, accurate, and timely payments. Delivering effective financial services also means we must maintain a close partnership with the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS).

Provide Cost, Economic, Financial Analysis, and Advice. Commanders and managers at every level require accurate, reliable, and relevant cost, economic, and financial information. Our professional cost analysts deliver independent cost analyses, cost reviews, and also develop models and techniques to improve these efforts. We also perform economic analyses and develop annual statements that describe our annual financial performance.

Exercise Fiduciary Responsibility. While all Air Force personnel are responsible for exercising fiduciary responsibility, our role is key. We must ensure everyone complies with fiscal laws and regulations and also ensure internal controls are in place to protect appropriated and non-appropriated funds. Further, it is our responsibility to provide guidance for commanders and managers to meet mission needs within the confines of fiscal laws and regulation. The public demands us to be good stewards of their funds.

Goals for Achieving Our Core Competencies

To support our core competencies, the strategic plan specifies seven goals identifying the actions needed to accomplish our mission more effectively and help us achieve our Vision. Associated with each goal are sub-goals identifying the specific actions needed to achieve the goal.

Realizing we must be ready to support deployments anytime, anywhere, our first goal is to Improve Readiness to Support Deployed Operations. All personnel subject to Expeditionary Aerospace Force (EAF) deployment are required to complete the FM contingency course via the web or CD-ROM and our Top Dollar contingency training program, which tests both technical competence and military readiness. Support to the warfighter is our top priority!

People are key to our success. Over the next few years, we will renew and sustain our force by recruiting, developing, and retaining high-quality Air Force financial managers. The challenge will be exacerbated by a large number of retirements, especially among our civilian workforce. To address this issue, we established a goal to Recruit and Retain Talented People. We'll increase the number of Palace Acquires, other civilian trainees, and career broadeners, and ensure they receive the appropriate level of training/experience. We will continue our successful professional development program and establish a comprehensive distance learning program to leverage training resources.

One of our key responsibilities as Air Force financial managers is to ensure sufficient funds are available for mission accomplishment. To address this responsibility we established a goal to Improve Budget Formulation and Execution. We're developing the Financial Information Resources System (FIRST) to meet needs at all Air Force levels for near real-time execution data, improved funds control, and inte-

grated budget processes. We've developed and are deploying the OPTEMPO system that will supply real-time flying hour cost information to commanders at all levels. Further, we're striving to streamline the budget process by reducing the size and redundancy of financial plans. We will also improve our analytical capabilities and increase the use of analytical tools used in making budgetary decisions.

Commanders and managers need timely, accurate financial information to manage the Air Force. We in the Air Force financial management community will focus on systems and training to provide needed information. Our next goal is to Provide Better Cost, Economic, and Financial Information. We will provide our people with better cost training and experience, improve our cost models, and continue deployment of a variety of cost information systems such as the Air Force Total Ownership Cost System, the OPTEMPO system, and the Job Order Cost Accounting System. We have other systems under development, and we will also train at least one person per base in economic analysis.

To comply with the law and ensure the public we are good stewards of their funds, we need to continually monitor and strengthen internal controls, improve our ability to preclude or detect fraud, and achieve auditable financial statements. Accordingly, our next goal is to Improve Financial Accountability. With special attention on internal controls, we're striving for zero cases of financial fraud and no more than ten open Anti-Deficiency Act cases at any one time. We are developing an automated cross-feed program to share best business practices and internal control issues requiring Air Force-wide attention. In accordance with the Chief Financial Officer's (CFO) Act, we have a plan to improve the quality of real and personal property data and a plan to increase the number of critical financial feeder systems that are certified CFO compliant. We're emphasizing internal controls through courses, magazine articles, and other means. We're also working to ensure problem disbursements are less than three percent of total funding for procurement and RDT&E. Thanks to the outstanding efforts of our worldwide financial management team, we are very close to achieving a positive opinion on our financial statements.

While meeting Air Force needs, we must find ways to get smaller and more efficient through automation and other improvements in business practices. The Wide Area Workflow (WAWF) system, Automated Business Services System (ABSS), an automated travel system, the Employee/Member Self Service System (E/MSS), and the LeaveWeb system are all tools which will help in streamlining and supporting the goal to Improve and Integrate Our Business Practices.

Effective organization is key to realizing our goals. So, too, is good communication. In support of the goal, Organize and Communicate Effectively, senior FM leaders will meet periodically to discuss key FM issues. We'll also hold regular functional specialty conferences, publish articles, present briefings, and encourage information cross-flow to keep personnel abreast of current events.

Making the Plan a Reality

During my travels Commanders have consistently praised the outstanding financial management support you are providing to the warfighter. With this new plan, we set the direction for the future. Just as we all played a part in building this very important document, it is even more important that we all participate in making it a reality. I ask each of you to study this plan, do your part to implement the goals and sub-goals, and help communicate the mission, vision, and values we all have embraced. Working together, we can continue to provide the best financial support to the world's premier Air Force—anytime, anywhere!

About the Author



Mr James R. "Ron" Speer has been the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Air Force (Financial Management) since 1 December 1997. Prior to his current position Mr Speer held a number of senior positions with the Air Force Audit Agency. These positions include Assistant Auditor General for Field Activities, Assistant Auditor General for Financial and Support Audits, and Deputy Assistant Auditor General for Operations.